THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b)Yes, Sir.

(c) The organisation named "Initiative" has submitted study report to Government, but there is no mention that 53 per cent children of the country are forced to live without milk. However, it is stated in the report that 53 per cent of Indian children under 5 are malnourished, in an age group where milk is a vital input for food and nutrition.

(d) No, Sir.

Rate of Rice Production

3. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that production of rice has not been increasing at the same rate as that of the requirement of the population;

(b) whether it is a fact that there has been decline in rice production in some States like Andhra Pradesh;

(c) whether ICAR or any other body has studied the underlying causes of this slowing down of the rate of growth of rice production; and

(d) if so, what are the causes of this decline?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) The IX Plan has envisaged required growth rate to meet domestic demand of rice by 2.19 per cent per annum whereas annual average growth rate of rice production during the first two years of IX Plan is 2.6 per cent per annum.

(b) Rice production at all India level has shown increasing trend.

However, in the State of Andhra Pradesh, there was less production during 1997-98 due to adverse weather situation. Production estimates are as follows:

(Million Tonnes)

	All India	Andhra Pradesh
1996-97	81.74	10.69
1997-98	82.53	8.51
1998-99	85.99	11.43

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Modern Food Industries

4. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to handover Modern Food Industries Limited in the hands of private sector company M/s Hindustan Lever Limited;

(b) if so, whether the value of the machines, equipments and land etc., was evaluated before handing over in the private hands;

(c) whether it is a fact that Government have handed over the company at much lower rate than the expected one to HLL; and

(d) whether the interest of workers was taken into account before handing over the company and if so, the further reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES OF MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) The Government has disinvested 74% of its equity holding in Modern Food Industries (India) Limited to M/s Hindustan Lever Limited.

(b) Yes, Sir.